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SUPPRESSED PRINCESS:

THE

AUTHENTIC, ROMANTIC, AND PAINFUL HISTORY

OF

AN EXCLUDED MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY.

BY LANDOR PRAED.

[REPRINTED FROM THE NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE "WEEKLY CHRONICLE."]

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SUPPRESSED PRINCESS

Reprinted from the Newcastle Weekly Chronicle, Saturday, December 5 1863.

THERE is more authentic romance in the streets of London than in any novel. In the quiet, half genteel, stuccoey, and prosaic streets of Camden Town there lives, in indigence and neglect, a lady of noble descent, who has the blood of two royal families in her veins, being descended from the last King of Poland and the great uncle of the present Queen of England. This lady bears the name of Lavinia Jannetta Horton Ryves, her proper rank and title being that of Princess of Cumberland and Duchess of Lancaster. Age, suffering and obscurity have accumulated upon her, but there is no documentary doubt of her being what she professes to be—an actual Princess of Cumberland. In 1850, when her children (she has three sons and three daughters) were languishing in sickness and want, she wrote to the Queen for aid. She was the appointed companion of the Queen when her Majesty was a little girl. Yet her Majesty sent no subsidy. The father of the Queen told Mrs. Ryves that "she could never ask anything of the Queen or her royal mother that would be refused by either." Yet when the Princess of Cumberland asked, in her old age and utmost need, she was refused. The conduct of the Queen was very unusual and must have proceeded from misapprehension or non-acquaintance with the facts. The refusal was unexpected and requires explanation. Mrs. Ryves's history is very remarkable. We have known many people with a romantic grievance, in which fact and imagination were so blended that the interest felt has had to struggle against want of proof. In this lady's case the proof is clear, systematic, curiously authentic and complete. There can be no doubt of its truth, if definite and confirmed documents go for anything. The strange story was once given to the world by the lady herself, assisted probably by advisers. Since 1820, it has from time to time challenged public attention, in odd unexpected ways in Law Courts, in Parliament, and lastly under the form of "An Appeal for Royalty." Mr. Coningham, M.P., has taken great interest in it; Sir Fitzroy Kelly, whose eminence is a guarantee of the reality of the case, is, we understand, engaged in drawing up a petition concerning it, with a view to Parliamentary action if need be.

The story of the Suppressed Princess sets forth that the Duke of Cumberland, born in 1745, who was the fourth brother to George III., had two wives. His first marriage was a secret to the public. His second marriage, which occurred in 1772, was the one known. His second wife was Lady Anne Horton, who, though bearing the title of Duchess of Cumberland, was never received at Court, nor recognized by the King. Her exclusion from Court continued unto the time of her death in 1803. The reason was, that the King (George III.) knew of the previous marriage of his brother, the Duke of Cumberland, and disapproved of this, and carried his disapprobation so far that he caused the passing of the Royal Marriage Act, still in force, to prevent these *mésalliances* in future. Though another origin is historically assigned of this Act, it is also referable to these circumstances.

When the Duke of Cumberland was a young man, there was a gentleman about the court of George III.—one Rev. Dr. James Wilmot. His ancestor was a De Villemot, who came over with the Conqueror. Everybody in England came over with the Conqueror: however, Dr. Wilmot was undoubtedly a gentleman of "good family," and, what is more to the purpose, had married the Princess of Poland, daughter of Stanislaus, last King of that country. Of this Polish marriage one daughter was the issue—Miss Wilmot, a lady of great accomplishments, and of yet more remarkable beauty. Being much about Court, the Duke of Cumberland became enamoured of her, and made her an offer of marriage, which was accepted, and they were married on the 4th of March, 1767, when the Duke was 22 years of age. There was nothing doubtful or mysterious about this marriage. It was done with deliberation, witnessed and authenticated in an unusually careful way. The position of Miss Wilmot's father at Court admitted of the highest cognizance of his family alliances. The Royal Marriage Act which requires the previous consent of the King to establish the legality of the marriage was not then in existence; but this condition was fulfilled. George III. was present at Miss Wilmot's marriage, which was "solemnized" at Lord Archer's, Grosvenor Square. The Rev. Dr. Wilmot, was the officiating clergyman, the Earl of Chatham (the William Pitt of oratorical memory), the Earl of Warwick, Lord Archer, and the King were present as friends of the bride. The first certificate of this marriage runs thus:—

"I hereby certify that I married Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, to Olive Wilmot, March 4, 1767, such marriage having been duly solemnized according to the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England.

(Signed) "J. WILMOT."

If this were the only document in existence, this would not go for much, 'as the certificate of the bride's father might be ascribed to interested motives; but a second certificate exists, which says:—

"I hereby certify that I married Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, to Olive Wilmot, March 4, 1767, such marriage having been duly solemnized according to the rites of the Church of England.

(Signed) "J. WILMOT."

(Signed) "GEORGE R.
"CHATHAM.

"I witnessed such marriage. (Signed) "WARWICK."

Plainly, there could be no intention on the part of the King, or advisers of the King, to ignore or disown the reality of this marriage. George III. and the Earl of Chatham knew the value of their written certification, and would never have given it unless they intended it to be used, if occasion required. But it would seem that Dr. Wilmot had lived long enough in the atmosphere of Courts to be aware that one could never make too sure of the Royal word, and therefore within seven months of the marriage of his daughter, the Duchess of Cumberland, he put her in possession of this third certificate :—

"Lords Chatham and Archer solemnly protest that the marriage of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, and Olive my daughter, the said Duke's present Duchess, was solemnized legally at the latter nobleman's residence, Grosvenor Square, London, by myself, March 4, 1767.

(Signed) "J. Wilmot.

(Signed) "Chatham.
"Archer.

"3rd Nov. 1767."

The evidence of the nobleman in whose house the marriage took place puts the matter beyond all doubt, when coupled again with the Earl of Chatham's corroboration. The King must have approved of the marriage and wished it to remain valid, and these noblemen must have known it, or they would not have thus accumulated proofs of the fact in Dr. Wilmot's hands. Here was a beautiful woman of good family and unquestioned personal character, married to the Duke of Cumberland. Were this a mere marriage of honour and not of law, the case would be poor, for everybody has not yet learned to expect that royalty is scrupulously bound by the obligation of its word, or that these personages would necessarily respect a marriage of honour. But Miss Wilmot's marriage is manifestly a lawful marriage. In the third certificate, the one signed by Lords Archer and Chatham, she is specifically styled "the Duchess," and was recognised as such by those lords. There was reason for all Dr. Wilmot's precautions. The Brunswick family were as curious a family as ever an inscrutable destiny placed upon the throne of a sensible nation. Within four years of the Duke of Cumberland's marriage with the Polish beauty, he went and married a Derbyshire widow, his first wife being then alive. This time he selected Lady Anne Horton, daughter of Simon, first Earl of Carhampton, and relict of Christopher Horton, Esq., of Cotton Hall, in the County of Derby. This second marriage took place on the 2nd of October, 1771. His Royal Highness behaved so far honourably that he married both these ladies. He was evidently one of those men of whom we hear much, who are unfortunately born before their time. The Duke of Cumberland was evidently greatly in advance of his age, and was suited by nature and grace to be a bright particular star in some Mormon settlement. His Royal Highness had a daughter born by his first Duchess in April, 1772, whose birth was attested by Dunning, the Solicitor-General of George III. (afterwards Lord Ashburton), and by Chatham. To make assurance doubly sure, two certificates of the baptism of "Olive, the infant daughter of the Duke of Cumberland," were made, and the second bears the attestation of Lord Warwick.

It has never been explained how it was or why it was that the marriage of the Duke with Miss Olive Wilmot was unavowed previously to his second marriage. Had the fact of the existence of a Duchess of Cumberland been publicly known, the second union with Lady Anne Horton would have been difficult or impossible. The King knew it, and to the credit of George III. he appears to have acted with kindness and with a feeling of justice towards the Princess Olive, and never recognised the second and unlawful wife, Lady Anne of Cotton Hall, and kept her from Court all her life.

It appears, however, that when the King became aware of his brother the Duke of Cumberland's second marriage he did all he could to protect the reputation of the first and lawful Duchess, and to promote the welfare of her child. But in order to protect his brother from either the legal consequences of bigamy or the scandal of it, George III. *wrote* a command to Lord Chatham that "our niece be rebaptized as Olive Wilmot." Another certificate was then made by the clergyman of the rebaptism, setting forth why it was done. That there was no intention to abolish or deny the infant is proved by another declaration signed by Lord Warwick, setting forth that "the infant child of the Duke of Cumberland" was received into his protection. In another certificate, Dunning, the Solicitor-General, declares "the Duke's marriage with Olive Wilmot to be legal by command of the King." Dunning must have known that the marriage was valid or he would have advised his royal master against this explicit declaration of it. Aware of the equivocal position that both mother and child were placed in by the rebaptism, he had commanded, the King was honourably anxious to do them justice. Chatham and Warwick in another document certified that "Olive was the only child of Henry Frederick, Duke of Cumberland, and Olive his wife," and to this the King attached his own sign manual "George R." More than this, he issued an order to Lord Chatham to pay £500 to the "Duke's daughter," during her life. Chatham's and the King's signatures are to this document. Documentary proof so circumstantial and exact hardly ever existed of similiar facts. Two other written orders were made, one saying "We declare the birth of Olive the infant of the Duke of Cumberland, by Olive his Duchess, to be legitimate, who is condemned to privacy by the act of bigamy committed by her royal father." This is a plain statement of fact, which nobody, not insane, would attempt to forge. Chatham, Dunning, and the King sign this. Afterwards the King (Lord Warwick witnessing) "commands £5,000 to be applied to the benefit of Olive the infant of our brother." Not content with these documentary precautions, George III. executed a yet more striking one, which "in the face of Almighty God" he "solemnly certified," that he gave his royal command that the "legitimate" Olive should be rebaptised, as her father had "committed an act of bigamy by marrying Anne Horton." Dunning, the Solicitor-General, also attests this emphatic document. Thus legitimatised and protected by royal acknowledgment, the little Princess, when scarcely a year old, was "created Duchess of Lancaster," and authorised "to bear the arms and use the arms of Lancaster." This order was given at the Palace of St. James's, May 21, 1773, and attested by Chatham and Dunning. In the lapse of time these documents, which all still exist, might be disputed. Even this point is met by a declaration made by the Earl of Warwick, in 1816, that the late Lord Chatham informed him that the "Lancaster creation" was "a conscientious act of his Majesty," and that the patent in due course came into his possession, and that he was aware that "Olive, Princess of Cumberland" was called "Olive Serres." About the same time, the Earl of Warwick, and Edward, Duke of Kent, father of the present Queen, jointly testified that the patent of her creation and certificate of birth were duly delivered to Mrs. Serres. The means of attesting the truth of the Duke of Kent's signature exist still, and it appears that its genuineness has never been denied. Why, then, should her Majesty hesitate to believe her father's word? How corroborated this word was we shall see.

What is also very curious as disclosed by Mrs. Ryves's documents, George III. himself had two wives living at the same time; the first and true wife, Hannah Lightfoot, he deserted, and she died in secret. Queen Hannah and

her three children were suppressed. The Lightfoot bigamy is neither curious nor unknown; but it has hitherto rested on rumour; the really curious part of the business is that Mrs. Ryves now furnishes the documents of the marriages. The Lightfoot union is denied by those only who have not examined the documents. Dr. Wilmot also was the clergyman who married the King in 1759, and William Pitt was a witness, and the desire to prevent this bigamy of his own coming up as a parallel to the Duke of Cumberland's double marriage, is assumed to have influenced the King to the rebaptisement of the young Princess Olive. Queen Hannah lived several years after the King's marriage with Queen Charlotte. However, as regards Mrs. Ryves's claim, the King, in a paper signed in 1773, undertook that the Princess Olive should be acknowledged after his death.

There is no doubt of the interest felt in the welfare of the young Princess by the King. Her mother, abandoned by the Duke, died of a broken heart in France two years after the birth of her child (1774). Her daughter, the Princess of Cumberland and Duchess of Lancaster, was brought up in a private station, and in ignorance of her rank. She displayed artistic talent, and married Mr. Serres, a celebrated marine painter, and had four children; her daughter Lavinia, born in 1797, is the present Duchess, who claims the title. George III. was aware of Mrs. Serres's marriage, and has left a certificate that the Princess Olive was living in 1803 as "Olive Serres."

In the year 1815, the Earl of Warwick having reason to believe that he was near death, thought it to be his duty to divulge the secret of which he was the sole surviving depository. He therefore told the Duke of Kent the particulars of Mrs. Serres's birth and connections. The Duke himself went to Seymour Place, where Mrs. Serres resided, and informed her of her claims to a different position in society to that which she had hitherto occupied. Lord Warwick went down to Warwick Castle and brought up all the documents, including those we have quoted and described. The Duke of Kent signed the most important, and the papers, including the creation of the Duchy of Lancaster, were delivered to Mrs. Serres. Lord Warwick died in 1816, and the Duke of Kent remained the only person, besides Mrs. Serres, to whom her history was known.

The Duke of Kent at once acknowledged his relationship to the Duchess of Lancaster and executed a gift to her, as his cousin the Princess of Cumberland, of a third of his estates, lands, and mines in Canada, binding his heirs, and consequently the present Queen, "to solemnly fulfil his covenant." No sooner was Lord Warwick dead than the Duke accepted the guardianship of Mrs. Serres, and bound himself in "a solemn promise to see his cousin reinstated in her royal birthrights." He informed Lord Eldon and Lord Liverpool that the Duke of Cumberland had left a legitimate daughter who would claim her birth rights on the death of George III. The Duke in the meantime supplied Mrs. Serres with £1,600 (obtained from the late Robert Owen) and afterwards gave her an annuity of £400 a year, which was paid at Coutts's as long as the Duke lived. Mrs. Serres had the opportunity of returning some portion of this kindness. When the Duke was embarrassed, about the time of the birth of our present Queen, Mrs. Serres supplied the money through her means, which enabled the Duchess of Kent to come to England, by which it resulted that the Queen became English by birth. In 1819, the Duke bequeathed Mrs. Serres £10,000. He appointed conditionally Mrs. Serres, the Princess of Cumberland, guardian of the Queen's education until she should be of age. He undertook to guarantee the rent of any house suitable to Mrs. Serres's rank, and to lay the certificates of her birth before the Prince Regent. He provided in another document for the payment of the £10,000 from his "Great Ealing" property. He certified that "his cousin the Princess of Cumberland was wrongfully called Mrs. Serres," and introduced her, among others of his friends, to Robert Owen, as his cousin, entitled to the rank of Princess Olive of Cumberland. In the Duke of Kent's last illness he commended, in writing, the "Princess," "otherwise Mrs. Olive Serres," to the Prince Regent as the legitimate daughter of the Duke of Cumberland. Twice he commended "his dear cousin Olive" to his "dear Alexandra," our present Queen, "trusting that his daughter will for his sake love and serve the Princess." Had the Duke of Kent lived, Mrs Serres would no doubt have regained her rights. The Duke's dying adjuration to his daughter the Queen has been inexplicably disregarded, which, considering the high personal character of her Majesty for honour and filial affection, can only have resulted from being mis-advised and probably prevented from making herself acquainted with the facts: for in all cases in which her Majesty has been rightly informed on these matters incidentally, she has acted with her usual clear sense of honour. The late Robert Owen published, a few years ago, the fact that his illustrious friend, the Duke of Kent, had introduced Mrs. Ryves's mother to him as his, the Duke's cousin; and his son, Robert Dale Owen, examining, about that time, a box of documents left at Indiana, America, by his father, discovered the Duke of Kent's acknowledgment to Robert Owen of the money advanced to him, which, on coming to the ears of the Queen, she immediately repaid to Mr. Owen.

It will be sure to be asked how it was that the first Duchess, who died of a broken heart, and the second Duchess, Mrs. Serres, did not, as might be expected, assume their rank. The first Duchess and her friends yielded to the command of George III. to keep secret a marriage which it was politically inconvenient to have made public; in case of compliance the King promising his protection, which he honourably afforded. Mrs. Serres, the second Duchess, was kept in ignorance of her position, until disclosed to her by the Duke of Kent. But on the death of George III. the obligation to secrecy was removed, and then she adopted the title of "Princess Olive of Cumberland"—and the long suppressed "Princess" burst upon surprised London. Various newspapers in 1820 gave particulars of her history, and her pretensions were admitted by the authorities and the Crown.

As Princess Olive of Cumberland she was invited by the Lord Mayor to the banquet at the Guildhall. Attended by a retinue of ladies, the Princess arrived and was received with all the honours of royalty. She went in state to Drury Lane, attended by Sir Gerard Noel, Bart., M.P., and was received with all the formalities usual at royal visits. Having entered St. James's Park, her carriage was refused egress at the Constitution Hill Gate. She refused to turn back, and sent her card to Lord Sidmouth, then Home Secretary, who authorised her carriage to pass, which it did, amid public acclamation. These incidents are of course no legal proof of royalty; but they are proofs that the rank claimed was avowed and acquiesced in by those who should, and no doubt would, have denied it, had that been possible, for the persons filling the highest political and legal offices in the state had been carefully made acquainted with the pretensions of Mrs. Serres. George IV. was requested to permit the proofs of the lady's claims to be laid before him. Lord Liverpool referred Mrs. Serres to the Vice Chancellor, Sir John Leach, who decided that his position precluded him from taking any steps—which Lord Liverpool must have known. Lord Eldon, in his turn, made a similar answer—adding that, if the Secretary of State officially referred the matter to him, he was ready to give an opinion.

The curiosity of the Duke of Clarence, afterwards Wil

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liam IV., was aroused, and he called on Mrs. Serres, and gave it as his opinion, when he had examined the documents, that the signatures of his father George III. and the Duke of Kent were genuine. The Duke of Sussex made a similar examination and admitted the authenticity of the royal signatures.

These Royal examiners thus admitting the facts, in 1820 a petition to George IV. was sent, embodying the preceding circumstances and corroborations of the genuineness of the signatures, from twelve other persons. No reply was given. George IV. was unlike his royal brothers in their interest in accelerating delayed justice.

Mr. H. Nugent Bell, who had gained the Huntingdon peerage, was then entrusted with Mrs. Serres's case, and laid it before the Home Office. Mr. Hobhouse required the allegations to be made more specific. This was done, and Lord Sidmouth caused answer to be made that the King was advised to give no "further commands upon her petition," that she "had no pretension to the title and equipage she had assumed—which was extremely offensive to the King." So all these fine words of royalty, repeated documents, and dying adjurations, came to nothing.

Poor Mrs. Serres, solemnly betrayed by the Duke of Kent if George IV.'s decision be final, was involved in debt in attempts to support her rank. It came to pass that she was arrested. She pleaded that as a member of the royal family she was privileged from arrest. Scarlett and Pollock were her counsel. Mr. Justice Bayley got rid of her claim by deciding that as she had "put in bail she had waived her privilege." Thus any decision upon the merits of the claim was evaded. The royal shuttlecock case proceeded thus?

In 1822, Mrs. Serres, Dr. Lushington being her counsel, appeared in the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, to enforce the will of George III. made in her behalf. This document set forth that—"In case of our royal demise we give and bequeath to Olive, our brother of Cumberland's daughter, the sum of £15,000, commanding our heir and successor to pay the same, privately, to our said niece, for her use, as a recompense for the misfortunes she may have known through her father." This paper bears the signature of the King, Dunning, Chatham, and Warwick. Affidavits were produced with a view to prove its entire authenticity. Mrs. Serres gave evidence herself as to the manner in which Lord Warwick and the Duke of Kent apprised her of her birth and gave her the documents in support of her claim. The signatures of Dunning and Warwick were proved and that of the King; the handwriting of the will being also proved to be in Warwick's hand. Dr. Lushington, Dr. Dodson, and Dr. Haggard argued that Kings had the right to make wills and dispose of their property thereby, of which precedents were given. On the other side, it was contended that the Court ought not to entertain the motion because it had no power to enforce the decision to which it might come. Sir John Nicholl, the Judge, took this view, and thus, without going at all into the merits of the claim, or the truth of the documents, the case was disposed of. Sir John, however, said a remedy might be found in certain proceedings in the Court of Chancery. But in that Court it was held that Sir John Nicholl's own decision barred all proceedings; which Sir John Nicholl could probably have foretold, as the head of one Court is quite aware of its position with respect to any other in point of authority.

The next step in the proceedings was the introduction of the case into the House of Commons by Sir Gerard Noel. Nothing could be more unfortunate than the conduct of Sir Gerard. He made a rambling speech—dealt with the length of time he had sat in the House—with Reform in Parliament—the loyalty of his Rutlandshire tenants, and the fact of his having worn the Prince's buttons. The dozing old Baronet ruined Mrs. Serres's case. Upon that he had only to say that "he believed it to be just." But belief in justice goes for nothing in the face of enemies. Justice requires to be supported by proofs, by vigilance and determination. The motion that Mrs. Serres's petition be referred to a select committee had, however, the advantage of being seconded by Mr. Hume, always a friend of those treated unjustly. But unfortunately he had never studied the case, and knew no more than that it was one that demanded inquiry. Sir Robert Peel, who resisted the motion on the part of the Government, had very little to do, and the opposition he offered was so shallow, that had Sir Gerard Noel been a man of any force of mind, his case must have been immensely strengthened in the eyes of the country. Sir Robert undertook to prove that the signatures to the marriage certificate of the Duke of Cumberland, and the will of the King were both forgeries. This was direct ground to take, and the proof of it would have set the question at rest and dismissed it with infamy. Sir Robert, however, adduced only the supposition that George III., being at variance with Lord Chatham about the American war, was not likely "to select him as a confidant in a transaction such as the one in question." Nothing could be more miserable in the way of proof than this, since he had been a confidant in the more serious affair of the King's own suppressed marriage. Sir Robert did not venture to deal with the authenticity of the signatures of the witnesses which had just been proved in a court of law. The reckless audacity of Sir Robert was on a par with the fatuity of Sir Gerard. Sir Robert's other arguments were that the officiating clergyman at the marriage was at Oxford on the morning of the day when it took place—that Lord Warwick signed his name another way, and that one of the minor witnesses was another person. Dr. Lushington was not present when the time of reply came. There is always somebody missing, when they are wanted, in this case. Poor Sir Gerard made no reply to Sir Robert's easily refuted assertions, and after declaring that he would prosecute the question to the last extremity, he said "he would not be so impertinent as to trouble the House to divide," and the motion of course was negatived without a division. So much for the right-hearted but weak headed advocacy of poor Sir Gerard!

At every stage of these well-meant but ineffective proceedings, Mrs. Serres missed the powerful friendship and protection of the Duke of Kent. Had he lived, his influence had secured her competent friends, and his testimony would have established her rightful claims.

In 1823, a number of gentlemen met at the Freemason's Tavern, under the Presidency of Sir G. Noel. By violence of speech, and yet more violent incapacity, they made matters worse, and contrived to command neither the sympathy nor the confidence of the public.

In 1834, Mrs. Serres died. The legacy of her rank had been a cost and suffering to her. She was interred in St. James's Church, Piccadilly, with a state to some extent suitable to her rank. There were friends who did not desert her when dead, and in a coffin of costly materials, usually appropriated to royalty, and bearing an inscription, setting forth the titles and honours which she claimed, the grave was made to bear witness of the outraged faith of which she was a victim. At her death the usual mishaps attended her. Her daughters were not near her. So she who had guarded so carefully the documents of her fate, was obliged to confide them to the custody of a female friend, to be preserved for her eldest daughter Lavinia, who had married and become Mrs. Ryves, and was now heiress of the claims of her mother. Official intimidation was brought to bear upon the lady who was made custodier of the Princess's documents—certainly they found their way into official hands. "After untold trouble, these pa-

pers were recovered to the possession of Mrs. Ryves. In 1844, a committee was formed for prosecuting the claims of the new Princess. A belief in the justice of these claims, and an honest indignation at the injustice of withholding her rights has never slept in the breasts of those acquainted with the facts. Mr. Millard, the honorary solicitor, was instructed to enter proceedings against the Duke of Wellington, as executor of George IV., for the non-payment of the bequest of his father. Mr. Loval and Mr. Kindersley drew a bill, when Mr. Millard suspiciously withdrew his services. In 1846, a bill was filed in Chancery by other friends—the Millard committee having dissolved. An act passed in the 40th of Geo. III., namely in 1800, provides "that any instrument in writing, made and executed by his Majesty, before the passing of the said act, as and for his last will and testament, * * shall be as effectual to dispose of his property as if made after the passing of this act." It would seem as though the act was passed to give effect to his Majesty's will of 1779 in Mrs. Serres's favour. The bill filed in Chancery by Mrs. Ryves, prayed for an account of the legacy of £15,000, and that the Duke of Wellington, as executor of George IV., might be decreed to pay the same from his effects. Lord Langdale gave judgment that the Court of Chancery had no power to give relief under a will that had not previously been proved in the proper court, in which court, as we have seen, it was not allowed to be proved. The Ecclesiastical Court declared it had no power to act—the claimant must go to the Court of Chancery. The Court of Chancery says it has no power to act because the Ecclesiastical Court has not acted. Sir John Nicholl says, "Go to Lord Lord Langdale;" Lord Langdale says, "Go back to Sir John Nicholl;" and so the Shuttlecock of Law rebounds.

This lady, holding the absolute creation of Duchess of Lancaster, is advised by high legal authorities that the title really descends to her, as well as the revenues of the Duchy. These revenues would amount now to an enormous sum. All these pecuniary claims, excepting one of £100,000, accruing chiefly from bequests and interest, Mrs. Ryves foregoes, "upon condition that her claims to be declared and treated as a member of the royal family be duly investigated before some competent tribunal." Why should not this investigation take place? The documents are very numerous, exceeding one hundred, and have been declared to be genuine by all competent to form an opinion upon them. It is a sort of royal scandal to suffer these claims to be preferred for forty years, and never inquired into. The high character and written requests of the Duke of Kent should secure the decency of an investigation. One wild journal, allnding to Mrs. Ryves's claims, has spoken of her as a lunatic lady. This is a very insane objection to make, for if lunacy be at the bottom of this claim, it is more interesting than sanity itself could make it. The lunacy which accumulates genuine documents extending over a hundred years, and obtains the signatures of King, of Duke, and the most eminent peers of the court circumstantially attesting, is a very superior thing. People in full possession of their senses do not shine in comparison with this prudent aberration of mind. The fact is, the case is quite sound, but has been mismanaged by those who have hitherto endeavoured to get these documents made legally effective. The lady, when she speaks herself, is clear, consecutive, and with all the traits of prejudice, obstinacy, and high feeling, peculiar to her alleged parentage. Her case is in her manners as well as in her legal proofs. But when the hand of others is seen in her statements there is no difficulty in accounting for the obstacles that have arisen in her way. Thus, in one address to the Queen, Mrs. Ryves is made, in a warning way, to announce herself as possessing "a great state secret affecting the honour of the House of Brunswick." The Queen could not be expected to listen to this appeal, nor barter for concealment of a secret "affecting the honour" of her family. A milkwoman of any spirit would reject and resent such an appeal. The lady is made to conceive that her statements will fall with "lightning force" on the Queen's mind. These would be fine times if any fair statement of facts could calculate on such swift success. There is a sublime simplicity in declaring it "a great state secret" that George the III. had two wives. Would it have taken anybody by surprise had the number been greater? What control had public opinion in those days over royal conduct? Mrs. Ryves is made to say that her due has been "long and cruelly withheld from her by dint of legal quibbles and lack of honest principle." If this be true, it is of no use to say it. Nobody of royal connection or influence will touch a case rearing such a formidable front of imputation. In 1848 the *Morning Post*, in many grand words, published several articles on this subject, which Mrs. Ryves has been by some one induced to adopt. Her commentatory parts of the book seem garnished by the same hand. This *Morning Post* writer thinks that, if this case be not decided, we shall have in England the example of a inconceivable "wrong for which there is no remedy." We have plenty of these cases. They are strewn up and down our political, social, and legal life. He must be in a very happy state, and have had most fortunate experiences, who does not know or has not met with numerous instances, in which wrong and injustice command no redress. The point which is true and favourable to the nation is, that these cases always arouse indignation among Englishmen; and even the general public, who know nothing of royalty, who are not courtiers, and have little reason to be so, are yet anxious that justice should be done to an injured Princess; and they do not like to hear of solemn promises being given and never redeemed. If people are to respect high rank it will only be because they see high faith kept in royal matters. The question is now happily under able consideration. In the hands of Mr. Coningham and Sir Fitzroy Kelly, generous sympathy and legal justice may be expected. It will serve the ends of public morality as well as those of loyalty, if the scandal of this protracted and undecided case be once and conclusively terminated.

It does appear that the long delayed day of justice is arriving. The law courts have at last commenced their tardy recognition. The *Morning Post* and *Morning Star* have reported the facts. In 1861, Mrs. Ryves appeared in the Court of Probate, before Sir Cresswell Cresswell, and established her legitimacy. She proved that her parents were married on the 1st September, 1791, at the parish church Barton-on-the-Heath, in the county of Warwick—that she was born at Liverpool, on the 16th of March, 1797, and was the eldest surviving issue of the marriage—that she was baptised in the parish church of St. Nicholas, in Liverpool, on the 31st August, 1797, and married to Anthony Thomas Ryves, at the parish church of St. George-the-Martyr, Southwark. The curate of St. Nicholas's parochial chapel of Liverpool, the Rev. John William Walsh, was subpœnaed by the court, and produced the original record of the baptism of Mrs. Ryves. Her father, Mr. Serres, was shown to have been the gentleman who established, at 2, Berners Street, London, the first British School of Art in England, with the exception of the Royal Academy, and that he was professionally engaged by the Admiralty at the Battle of Trafalgar. He was the son of Domine Serres, who was a Frenchman, and the first foreigner who obtained the distinction of admission to the membership of the Royal Academy, which has long allowed his granddaughter, Mrs. Ryves, an

annuity. Mrs. Ryves addressed the court on this occasion herself, in a very lucid, succinct manner, and displayed a memory of remarkable accuracy. Mr. Welsby, on the part of the Crown, watched the application of Mrs. Ryves for a decree of legitimacy. Sir C. Cresswell, after availing himself of the attendance of other judges, and the assistance of his learned brother, Justice Willes, said, "We think the case is established. Mrs. Ryves, the petitioner, has proved her three propositions, namely that her father and mother were lawfully married, that she was their lawful daughter, and that she was a natural born subject of these realms." He accordingly made a decree to that effect. Mrs. Ryves thanked the Court for the trouble they had taken in investigating the case. Sir C. Cresswell, in the dignified language of an English judge of these days, said that "nobody owed the Court any thanks for anything it did, as it was merely its duty." Let us hope that in the able and influential hands of Sir Fitzroy Kelly other courts will no less do their duty—in former years postponed.

No English journal, so far as I am aware, excepting the *Morning Post*, has endeavoured to awaken public opinion to the injustice done to this lady. The proprietor of this journal, on being consulted, promptly and generously volunteered whatever assistance it was in his power to render. The sympathies of this journal are with justice, as justice, to all classes, high and low, and the editor thinks that this long-injured lady is entitled by every consideration of honour, courtesy, and public respect, to have her claims heard, investigated, and refuted, or admitted.

When her present Majesty's royal father was dying, he wrote—

"Should I not recover, I commend my dear cousin Olive [Mrs. Ryves's mother] to my wife [our Queen's mother] who will, *for my sake, love and serve her until she recovers her royal rights.* I solemnly recommend my daughter [the present Queen] to revere the Princess Olive of Cumberland for my sake. If this paper meets my dear Alexandra's eye [that of her present Majesty], my dear cousin Olive will present it, whom *my daughter will for my sake, I hope, love and serve*, should I depart this life."

Never were words more honourable, more conscientious, more anxious, more kind, or more touching than these dying words of the Queen's father. What can be the secret of that sad silence which has followed them? No subject of the Queen can read them without a feeling of painful wonder. Looking at an injunction so solemn and so undisputed, and at the unhappy fate of the lady Olive, and the prolonged privation and suffering of her unfortunate daughter, Mrs. Ryves, there remains a great wrong which the people should see redressed, or a great mystery which it should be a point of royal honour to unravel.

LANDOR PRAED.

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